

# Explaining variations in regulatory regimes: a case study of two food sectors in China

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### Introduction

Regulatory regimes vary largely in the same policy area in different regions. Even within a country, it is never the case that regulatory regimes are consistent in different regulatory areas or within the same targeting sector

E.g. in China, food regulatory regimes vary between the agricultural and manufactured sectors, and between locally-consumed and exported food

**Research question**  
Why do regulatory regimes vary in control tools and styles in different food sectors?

**Empirical study**  
A comparative case study of food safety regulation between two food sectors in a Chinese province

**Research areas**

- ❖ Regulation, especially those from the political science perspectives
- ❖ Regulatory enforcement
- ❖ Regulatory styles based on the grid/group cultural theory

**Research gap and significance**

- ❖ Explain the linkage between cultural theory on regulatory styles and political science explanations
- ❖ Assess The goodness of fit of the well-established Western theories in a new context – China

### Analytical Framework

Explain the variations in control tools and styles from four perspectives:

**Four Potential Causal Factors**

- Opinion-responsiveness / Media attention
- Private interest
- Institutional setting
- International obligation

determine

**Variations in**

- Control tools
- Control styles (oversight, competition, contrived randomness, mutuality)

**Of the three control components (e.g. standard-setting, information-gathering, behaviour-modification) in different regulatory regimes**

### Methods

**Comparative case study** between the agricultural and manufactured food sectors.

Data collection:

- Primary sources: laws, rules, government documents, interviews with government officials, the regulated actors, relevant NGOs
- Secondary sources: academic literatures, media reports, scientific reports

### Data

**Agricultural Products**

- Lower local and international media attention
- Very low industry concentration
- Lower fragmentation of regulatory bodies
- Lower international scrutiny
- Higher export amount

**versus**

**Manufactured Food Products**

- Higher local and international media attention
- Medium industry concentration
- Higher fragmentation of regulatory bodies
- Higher international scrutiny
- Lower export amount

	Standard-setting	Information-gathering	Behaviour-modification
<b>Oversight</b>	Hierarchical ordering	Subpoena-style	Response to authority
<b>Competition</b>	Developing through 'natural selection'	Incentive-style	Quest to be high in a league
<b>Mutuality</b>	Participative	Network-style	Exposure to mutual influence or persuasion
<b>Contrived Randomness</b>	Unpredictable /disorganised	Lottery-style	Pay-offs of action unpredictable

### Results

**Opinion-responsiveness / Media attention**

Opinion ↑ → Regulatory Aggressiveness ↑ (oversight + mutuality styles)

(Remarks: regulatory officials also control the public opinions through media censorship)

**Private interest**

Industry concentration ↑ → Regulatory Aggressiveness ↓ (mutuality style)

Local economy and employment ↓ → Regulatory Aggressiveness ↓

**Institutional-setting**

Fragmentation of regulatory power ↑ → aggressive (competitiveness style)

**International obligation**

Export-orientation ↑ → Regulatory Aggressiveness (oversight style)

A separated regulatory mechanism is established for exported food, which is directly supervised by the central level government

### Conclusion

- ❖ Control tools are more oversight alike for sector with higher media attention; but the sole impact of media is difficult to assess since the relationship is interdependent and interactive to each other
- ❖ The choice of institutional setting is affected by the force of international obligation
- ❖ Exported food is regulated by a separated regulatory mechanism
- ❖ Inspection and examination measures for exported food are more stringent